

DRAFT

**Chalet Forest Reserve
Middlefield-Peru Forest Reserve
Westhampton Forest Reserve**

Draft Proposals

September 29, 2005

Please send comments on this proposal by November 1, 2005 to:

Christy Edwards
Land and Forest Policy Coordinator
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02114
E-Mail: Christy.Edwards@state.ma.us

Overview of Natural Resources within the proposed Chalet Forest Reserve:

The proposed forest reserve is located in the towns of Cheshire, Windsor, Dalton, and Lanesborough in the northern Berkshires. It includes the majority of the Chalet Wildlife Management Area, and portions of the Winsor State Forest, the Eugene Moran Wildlife Management Area, and the Stafford Hill Wildlife Management Area. The proposed reserve offers opportunities for hiking, snowshoeing, fishing and hunting and contains sections of the Appalachian Trail.

The proposed Chalet Forest Reserve received the highest biodiversity rating among the forest reserves proposed within its ecological land unit (i.e. areas with similar elevation and geology that likely have very similar ecological characteristics) using the eleven biodiversity criteria recommended to EOEA by experts from outside and within state government (see description of the biodiversity rating above). The proposed Chalet Forest Reserve rated highly for percentage of forest cover within ten kilometers of the proposed reserve, percentage of protected land within ten kilometers of the proposed reserve, and percentage of interior forest.

The proposed forest reserve also contains about 5,000 acres of land that was forested in 1830. These acres were likely never converted to agriculture, and were likely used as woodlots for firewood throughout the 1800's. These continually forested sites are often referred to as Primary Forest. More than 4,000 acres of 1830 (Primary) forest within the proposed reserve are also interior forest habitat. This is the highest co-occurrence of primary and interior forest on Division of Fisheries and Wildlife lands statewide.

Overview of Natural Resources within the proposed Middlefield-Peru Forest Reserve:

The proposed Middlefield-Peru Forest Reserve is located in the towns of Middlefield, Peru, and Becket in the central Berkshires, and includes portions of the Middlefield State Forest, the Walnut Hill Wildlife Management Area, and the Peru Wildlife Management Area.

The proposed forest reserve ranked seventh in the state among the 22 potential forest reserves using the biodiversity rating system described above and rated highly for percentage of forest cover within ten kilometers of the proposed reserve and percentage of protected land within ten kilometers of the proposed reserve. This proposed forest reserve site also rated highly for the percentage of land that was forested in 1830..

EOEA is considering an area within the Savoy Mountain and Mohawk Trail State Forests as an alternative reserve location to the proposed Middlefield-Peru Forest Reserve. This possible reserve location falls within the same ecological land unit (i.e. area with similar elevation and geology that likely have very similar ecological characteristics) as the proposed Middlefield-Peru Forest Reserve.

Overview of Natural Resources within the proposed Westhampton Forest Reserve:

The proposed Westhampton Forest Reserve is located in the towns of Chesterfield and Huntington in the central Berkshires. It includes portions of the Gilbert A. Bliss and Deadbranch State Forests and the Hiram H. Fox Wildlife Management Area.

The proposed forest reserve had the highest number of viable rare communities and acres of old growth forest among the forest reserves proposed within its ecological land unit (i.e. areas with similar elevation and geology that likely have very similar ecological characteristics). This proposed reserve also rated highly for the percentage of Living Waters Critical Supporting Watershed land.